

REMINISCENCES OF RUSSIA

Guitar Music by Russian Composers

Konstantin Vassiliev • Sergey Rudnev • Viktor Kozlov

Irina Kulikova, Guitar



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The history of Russian guitar music was quite unknown in the West until the American scholar and publisher, Matanya Ophee, edited his extensive series entitled *The Russian Collection* in the late 1980s. The guitar came to Russia in the 1780s and 1790s towards the end of the reign of Catherine the Great. Over the following decades there was a considerable influx of foreign musicians into the country, including professional guitarists. In 1798 the first method for the seven-string guitar was published and this was followed by similar pedagogic material. One of the most influential personalities in the development of the seven-string guitar in Russia at this time was Andrei Sychra (1772-1850), who published hundreds of pieces for the instrument. The great majority of his works, as Ophee points out, were arrangements of Russian folk-songs, which 'became an integral part of guitar tradition in Russia and their popularity has not abated to our days'.

In recent years a number of younger Russian guitar virtuosos have established an international reputation through their concerts and the winning of competitions. Many of these performers turn to composing and this selection reveals the abiding strength of the folkloric element in Russian guitar music. Or as Matanya Ophee expressed it, 'In Russia, folk-music became the subject of a fantastic infatuation of the people with their own music, perhaps one of the most remarkable attributes of the Russian soul'.

Konstantin Vassiliev, born in Siberia in 1970, studied guitar and composition at the Novosibirsk Academy of Music, before taking post-graduate studies in 1995 at the Münster Conservatory. His compositional output includes chamber music but mainly he has concentrated on writing for the guitar. His works have been published in various countries including the USA, Japan, France, Germany, Canada, and Russia, and performed by leading artists. His musical styles range from the romantically melancholy to contemporary expressiveness.

The suite, *Three Forest Paintings*, consists of programme music conveying the expressive poetry of the

forest. The composer perceives the forest in terms of a human soul – sometimes calm and light, sometimes impetuous and unfathomable. This synthesis of aspects of nature brought about the idea of connecting features of different styles. The musical language of the suite is essentially tonal, and only the third movement *Dance of the forest ghosts*, differs by using a symmetric scale. Here the balance between tonal and non-tonal systems is a special element of the harmonic structure.

Swan Princess is dedicated to Irina Kulikova. The swan in folk art often symbolizes beauty and fidelity but here the imagery is more complex. The work has two contrasting parts, demonstrating the opposing elements of the bird's character. Furthermore the swan princess is symbolic of a person's inner being, full of contradictory feelings and emotions.

Three Lyric Pieces pays homage to great composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Elegie* is dedicated to the tragic fate of Sergey Rachmaninov, described as 'the last romantic' and compelled to emigrate after the Russian Revolution. During a long exile, he completed only six compositions. The middle part of *Elegie* is concerned with the therapeutic power of art, which helped the artist to endure the tragic events of his life.

Reminiscence, in memory of the Paraguayan guitarist, Agustín Barrios Mangoré, alludes to his tremolo compositions such as *Sueño en la Floresta*. The work is intended to express the dual nature of Barrios's creativity, romanticism and the religious.

Mogiana, a homage to the Brazilian composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos, is a Russian composer's impression of Brazil. The title is from Mogi das Cruze, a city near São Paulo. Dance forms have a special significance for Brazilians as it is the music accompanying them through life from cradle to grave. Lyricism, dance and spontaneity are inherent in both Brazilian and Russian music.

Born in Tula, in 1955, Sergey Rudnev demonstrated musical talent at a young age. In 1971 he entered the

Tula Music College to study *bayan* (the Russian accordion invented in Tula) and balalaika. Having worked out the essentials of guitar playing without tuition owing to the lack of a guitar class at the College, he began private lessons with the Moscow guitarists V. Slavin and P. Panin. From 1975 to 1977, as a student at the Tula Military College, he played for the garrison orchestra. Having completed his national service, he opened his own class of classical guitar in Tula.

In Moscow in 1980 Sergey Rudnev met the notable Argentinian guitarist, Maria Luisa Anido, a meeting which changed his attitude to guitar techniques and altered the focus of his musical activities. Since then, Rudnev has become well-known as a guitar composer. His first compositions were influenced by Western music and jazz harmonies. But eventually he became attracted to Russian traditional music and made arrangements for guitar based on folk-songs and dances, which he played in recitals. Since 1996, Rudnev has been Cultural Programmes Director for the Leo Tolstoy State Memorial Museum-Estate, Yasnaya Polyana, as well as Music Director of the Children's State Philharmonic.

After a concert at the Column Hall of the Union House, Moscow, Rudnev met Matanya Ophee and as a result a selection of his guitar music was published by Editions Ophée in 1994. Ophee has described Rudnev's works as outstanding 'for their carefully thought-out structure and composition', some being 'lyrical in nature while others carry a more dramatic presence'. After a childhood in the small village of Osinovka, Sergey Rudnev, an avid collector of traditional Russian folk-songs and dances, was strongly influenced by the rich musical culture of his native environment.

Sergey Rudnev has said his purpose in writing music is 'to create complete works for the guitar built upon popular Russian folk songs using folk and classical techniques'. His compositions 'strive to emulate the sound of the orchestra within the limited boundaries of the guitar', and he likes to use the entire range of the instrument, utilising the higher register to explore 'its expressive timbre'.

As Ophee has pointed out, *The Old Lime Tree*, an

arrangement rather than a literal transcription of a Russian folk-song, belongs to the *protiazhnaiá* ('long drawn out') genre, where time signatures and bar lines 'can be safely ignored'. The work is indeed an extended composition, passing through a number of moods and guitar techniques, ranging from arpeggios supporting a beautiful melody, to fast scalic passages, and a strumming passage evoking the balalaika.

Between Steep Banks, subtitled *Improvisation*, begins quietly before becoming gently more complex, the composer indeed making use of the higher notes of the guitar at specific points throughout. A distinctive bass part counterpoints his imaginative melodic improvisations which both recall the opening theme and progress some way beyond it. The composition concludes, after some of the highest notes of the guitar, with a trickle of harmonics.

Viktor Kozlov, a graduate of the Urals State Conservatory, participated in many guitar competitions in Russia and abroad. He won the first regional competition for Russian folk instruments in Chelyabinsk in 1988 and was awarded a diploma from Gorky City in 1990. Since that time he has performed recitals throughout Russia. As a composer of guitar music Kozlov was awarded first prize in Donetsk (1982) and Moscow (1988). Currently he teaches at the Chelyabinsk Music College and is Chairman of the Classical Guitar Association in the region's Musical Society.

Dedication to the Russian Land has a ternary structure beginning with a little rhythmic figure like a beating drum. Gradually a subtle melodic line infiltrates, interspersed with simple strumming of chords till the insistent rhythmic pattern returns. The middle section, marked *Presto giocoso*, presents a lively dance with rapid left hand figurations followed by a *più cantabile* episode. This is broken by a return to the dance, culminating in full-blooded strumming and a further melodic section. The coda takes us back to the opening mood, marked *tranquillo*.

Flying Dutchman is pensively lyrical, full of exquisite sonorities and the nostalgic longing which the guitar expresses so well. After the opening serenity, a tremolo section sparkles into a different texture requiring much

virtuosity, especially when arpeggio patterns are interspersed with rapid scale passages. By the end of the composition, tranquillity is restored.

Ballade for Beautiful Elena, dedicated to the composer's wife, opens with wistful fragments of broken chords before progressing to the main melodic lines. A touching arpeggio episode follows with evocations of heart-felt romance of great intensity and beauty.

Graham Wade

Grateful acknowledgement is due to the scholarship of Matanya Ophee and to comments kindly provided by Konstantin Vassiliev on his own compositions.

Special thanks...

Irina Kulikova plays a Simon Marty guitar with Savarez Alliance Cantiga strings. She wishes to thank Savarez for their generous support for this recording. Thanks also to Norbert Kraft for bringing these reminiscences to life.



To my father Anatoly Kulikov, my mother Vinera Kulikova, my brother Pavel Kulikov, my sister-in-law Valery Kulikova, my niece Sofia Kulikova and my grandmother Anisa Nakipova. Love knows no distance.

Irina Kulikova



Irina Kulikova is one of the world's most enchanting guitarists. Musicians, critics and audiences love her for the rare beauty of her sound and the captivating way she tells stories with her guitar. Her mother – cellist Vinera Kulikova – first introduced her to music at the age of five. At twelve, she was travelling across Russia and abroad for concerts. Through the years, she received over thirty awards, culminating in 2008 with first prize at the prestigious competitions of Michele Pittaluga in Italy, Guitarra Alhambra in Spain, Forum Gitarre Wien in Austria and Iserlohn in Germany. Today, Irina Kulikova tours far afield, in Europe, North America and Asia, with appearances at leading festivals and in major concert halls, including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow and the Oriental Arts Centre in Shanghai. With her fourth solo album, she celebrates her 25th anniversary as a guitarist, sharing some dear *Reminiscences of Russia* with her audience worldwide. www.irinakulikova.com

Multiple award-winning guitarist Irina Kulikova celebrates her 25th anniversary as a performer with this recording of works by contemporary Russian composer-guitarists. Winner of the Michele Pittaluga, Guitarra Alhambra, Iserlohn and Forum Gitarre Wien competitions, she has selected a programme that reflects the abiding strength of the folkloric vein in Russian musical life. Rich and expressive poetry is the hallmark of the music of Konstantin Vassiliev, not least in his homages to other composers in *Three Lyric Pieces*, while Sergey Rudnev and Viktor Kozlov explore vibrant dance patterns and moments of tranquillity in their own equally colour-conscious compositions.



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Konstantin Vassiliev (b. 1970):		Konstantin Vassiliev:	
Three Forest Paintings (2001) 12:58		Three Lyric Pieces (2003) 12:09	
① The Old Oak	5:44	⑦ Elegie in memoriam	
② Snowdrops	3:25	Sergey Rachmaninov	4:32
③ Dance of the Forest Ghosts	3:49	⑧ Reminiscence in memoriam	
Sergey Rudnev (b. 1955):		Agustín Barrios	4:00
④ The Old Lime Tree (1978)	7:34	⑨ Mogiana in memoriam	
Konstantin Vassiliev:		Heitor Villa-Lobos*	3:37
⑤ Swan Princess (2010)	7:57	Sergey Rudnev:	
(dedicated to Irina Kulikova)*		⑩ Between Steep Banks –	
Viktor Kozlov (b. 1958):		Improvisation (1980)*	6:42
⑥ Dedication to the		Viktor Kozlov:	
Russian Land (1990)	9:06	⑪ Flying Dutchman (1993)	4:57
		⑫ Ballade for Beautiful Elena	
		(1994)	3:46

* WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

Irina Kulikova, Guitar

Recorded at St John Chrysostom Church, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, from 3rd to 6th October, 2013

Producers: Norbert Kraft and Bonnie Silver • Engineer and editor: Norbert Kraft

Booklet notes: Graham Wade • Publishers: Gendai Guitar Edition (tracks 1-3); Editions Orphée (tracks 4, 10); Les Productions d'OZ (tracks 5, 7-9); VP Music Media (track 6); Bèrben Edizioni Musicali (tracks 11, 12) • Cover painting: *Pines by the Stream* by Vladimir Irodionivich Bebiya